



## ABSENTEE VOTING

The State of Iowa has special procedures for individuals residing in hospitals or health care facilities who want to vote using an absentee ballot.

Requesting an absentee ballot. Use the form on the Secretary of State's website ([www.sos.iowa.gov](http://www.sos.iowa.gov)) or call at (515) 281-5204 to request the form be sent to you via U.S. Mail.

The request must be submitted by 5 p.m. on the Friday before the election. If you were admitted to the facility or hospital after Friday and before election day, you may contact the county auditor directly to request an absentee ballot.

Voting. A bipartisan team of election officials must deliver the absentee ballot to you. You will be notified when the team will be delivering the ballot to you. If you will not be available at that time, you may arrange for another time that will be more convenient to you.

The team members will give you your absentee ballot and wait while you mark it. They will return your voted ballot to the county auditor's office.

## Voting

Fact Sheet | August 2012

### Every citizen has the inherent right to vote.

Under both the United States and Iowa Constitutions, every adult citizen may vote unless that person is either (1) declared mentally incompetent to vote; or (2) has been convicted of an infamous crime.

### What does it mean to be "mentally incompetent"?

A person is mentally incompetent to vote if he or she *"lacks sufficient capacity to comprehend and exercise the right to vote"*.

EVERY CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES... SHALL BE ENTITLED TO VOTE AT ALL ELECTIONS...

IOWA CONST., ART. II, SEC. 1

### How does an individual go about registering to vote?

First, the individual must obtain a voter registration form. The form may be downloaded from the Secretary of State's website, or the form can be requested by calling (515) 281-5204. The form will be sent via the U.S. Mail.

After providing the information requested, the form must be signed. If a person is not physically able to sign, they may use a mark or stamp they regularly use or may ask someone to sign for them – as long as the signer is doing it at the request of and in the presence of the voter.

### Who determines competency?

The court is usually asked to make this determination during either a commitment hearing or at the time of granting guardianship.

### Once a guardian is appointed, is the ward automatically presumed to be mentally incompetent?

NO! Just because an individual has a guardian does NOT mean he or she is incompetent.

Rather, the judge is required to make a separate determination regarding competency to vote.

This form must be submitted at least 10 days before a primary or general election and 11 days before any other election. Your county auditor will send you a voter registration card within two weeks.

**Attorneys-in-fact and guardians are NOT authorized to sign a voter registration or absentee ballot on behalf of their principal or ward**